



A Pale Horse

By Charles Todd
ISBN: 9780061672705

Introduction

In the ruins of Yorkshire's Fountains Abbey lies the body of a man wrapped in a cloak, his face covered by a gas mask. Alongside him is a book on alchemy, which belongs to the local schoolmaster, a conscientious objector in the Great War. Who is this man, and is the investigation into his death being manipulated by a thirst for revenge?

The search takes Inspector Ian Rutledge of Scotland Yard to Berkshire, where cottages once built to house lepers stand in the shadow of a great white horse cut into the chalk hillside. The current inhabitants of the cottages are outcasts, too, hiding from their own mysterious pasts.

Meanwhile, the British War Office searches for a missing man of their own, someone whose war work was so secret that no one seems to know his real name or what he did. Here is a puzzle requiring all of Rutledge's daring and skill.

Questions for Discussion

1. How does the ghostly presence of Hamish MacLeod, who served with Ian Rutledge in the trenches, contribute to the dramatic pace of *A Pale Horse*?
2. How does the atmospheric setting of Berkshire, with its majestic Uffington White Horse and the nearby prehistoric tomb of Wayland's Smithy, color the events of this novel?
3. How would you characterize Martin Deloran's role in Rutledge's quest to identify Gaylord Partridge/Gerald Parkinson's body?
4. How do Rutledge's memories of his actions in the war haunt him, and what role do they play in his ability to judge his fellow man?
5. How does the erratic behavior of Sarah and Rebecca Parkinson implicate them as suspects in their father's mysterious death?
6. To what extent does Meredith Channing's decision to visit Rutledge in Berkshire betray the nature of her feelings for him?
7. Why are the residents of the Tomlin Cottages being persecuted, and to what extent was the perpetrator of these acts of violence a surprise to you?
8. Why does Rutledge's late discovery of Mrs. Parkinson's delivery and subsequent loss of a baby boy alter his analysis of the case?
9. Of the many twists and turns in *A Pale Horse*, which did you find most engrossing, and why?
10. As you read *A Pale Horse*, did you find yourself inclined to believe in the guilt or innocence of any of the characters? To what extent was the resolution of the novel what you anticipated?

About the Author

Under the name Charles Todd, Charles Todd and his mother, Caroline Todd, have authored nine Ian Rutledge mysteries—*A False Mirror*, *A Long Shadow*, *A Cold Treachery*, *A Fearsome Doubt*, *Watchers of Time*, *Legacy of the Dead*, *Search the Dark*, *Wings of Fire*, and *A Test of Wills*—and one stand-alone novel. The mother-and-son writing team live in Delaware and North Carolina, respectively.